

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

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SIXPENCE

WHAT WE ARE WORKING FOR

JOURNALISTS, teachers, statesmen, and film makers, assorted purveyors of assorted ideas, are most of their time experiencing great difficulty in seeing the wood of ultimate purpose for the trees of present expediency. They are so caught up in their war-time chores that the long-term issues and the wider tasks tend to be forgotten. It is good sometimes to take stock of the ends to which we are working.

We have the privilege today of living in the most exciting period of the world's history. Man at last has the power of moulding the place he inhabits to suit his needs. It is also true that he has the power of killing off his own race more quickly than unaided nature can ever do. This present period is exciting because, even as we use our power to the end of mutual extermination, we are doing more, on balance, to shape the world as we want it.

Due to the impetus of technical developments, man is out of joint with his times. He doesn't know how to get enough food when there is an economic slump; he doesn't know how to keep well when he works in the dusty air of factories and mines; he doesn't know how to be good friends with formerly distant foreigners who are now his neighbours; he doesn't know how to live his family life now that the needs of the community are of a wholly different order from what they were half a century ago. Man has eaten some of the tree of knowledge and by no power whatever can he undo that act. True, it has given him the power to see that he cannot alter the past. Now he needs to appreciate that he *can* mould the future.

The very technical resources, which have put him at cross purposes with the world, also give man the means to fashion himself to meet these changes, and to have an adventurous time turning them to good account.

The trouble is that the world has grown ten times smaller—or, if you like, time goes ten times more quickly—and that most people just don't know it. It is as if a man who has lived for many years in a spacious town house with high ceilings and wide stairs, suddenly finds himself in a country cottage. At first he bumps his head on the ceilings and keeps tripping up the stairs. He has to accept the fact that he is in a new house, and then to make himself at home in it. The sooner he does that, the sooner he will be able to spend time getting to know the fascinating new life of the countryside and the quality of the people who live in it.

The answer to his problem is that he should have more knowledge of himself and of his new world. The first conquest of man's surroundings demanded that he should not too closely work out just what was his precarious hold on life. He would have been appalled at the truth. Shielded by ignorance he could, helped by those who served as unquestioning slaves, build up his modern tools of science and industry, and following on them, a wealth of new conceptions.

Now that they exist it is vital that *all* men should understand these new tools and ideas so as to use them wisely—for no one can avoid coming into contact with them every day of his life.

One example of the new tools is radio. As we know, it was used by the Nazis to cut off their people from relations with other peoples. The German people did not know the potentialities of the new instrument; they did not know that radio sets which receive only stations broadcasting one kind of idea, and no other, are a mighty force for evil.

But another quality of this new world is that fresh groups form themselves in the community; one such group is the National Fire Service. (Its existence is related to the invention of the incendiary bomb.) Here was the opportunity for men and women to meet, talk and grow to know the rich world of one another's experiences. The fullness of this opportunity could only be realised by a conscious effort—they formed discussion groups, the germ of a new political idea.

These are bare indications of the possibilities. But they stand no chance of being realised in any healthy form unless people know that they exist—as possibilities. This interpretation of man to himself and his new world is the vital factor upon which his social progress and, indeed, his continued survival depends. It is upon this fact only, and not upon any aesthetic virtue in the "creative interpretation of reality" that the great goal for Documentary is based.

Every documentary film made must be directed to this end—of showing reality so that people can understand it; and showing it excitingly so that they want to know *and feel* more of it.

That reality may be anything from the biological processes by which their baby grows into a man or woman, to the opportunities that baby will have for a full and happy life in later manhood; from the way a wireless set works, to the way that a wireless set can be used to plunge the world into war or bring about a new era of vivid healthy living. The real world is made up of people and things, and ideas about people and things. All these can be made exciting and attractive without building fantasies to cloak their true nature.

The way in which we make the real world seem exciting does not matter—it may be by slick montage, clever stories, lots of colour, pretty people, in films, radio, or television, in music or painting, in ballet or sculpture.

But whatever method is used it must be to the point that men and women welcome the idea of living in a real world. It is only by knowing it truly and honestly, that they can work and play in it happily. With knowledge of that real world they can have such a full life that all of man's heavens, from Mount Olympus to Hollywood, Calif., will seem as less than the dreary emptiness of a ball-room in the morning sunlight. People will see that the world itself is rich enough and noble enough to provide for all their needs.

FILM 'PROGRESS' IN THE SERVICES

THE British Armed Forces have become very important makers and users of films, though, in each of the three Services, film activities began in a small way. This survey is concerned primarily with the position today, and likely future developments, but an idea of the original status of films in the British Army, for example, is represented by the predicament of its only two cameramen in 1940—Harry Rignold and Walter Tennyson D'Eyncourt. They were in France when that country was over-run, and accordingly were sent home. A few good pictures of blitz scenes in French towns were turned in, but the military history of Dunkirk had to be left to a single newsreel operator working with the Navy.

Army Films

From these beginnings has grown the organisation of today, centralised in P.R.2—Public Relations 2. The two cameramen have grown, at the moment of writing, to some eighty together with eight directors, distributed on various fronts. These units send in their material to P.R.2, who sort, process, censor and classify it into library. From P.R.2 the material goes to its various users, of which the chief is the Army Film Unit at Pinewood.

Some of the details of this organisation give an encouraging picture of a public relations policy attuned to its responsibilities and growing on sound lines. There is an Army Film and Photographic Service (A.F.P.S.) whose job it is to shoot material on the scene of action, be it battlefield or rear base. They get still pictures (using still cameras) as well as film-scenes which are, of course, their prime concern. Attached to the Eighth Army and covering the Middle East (Syria, Iraq, Iran, etc.) is No. 1 Unit of the A.F.P.S., consisting of four directors and forty cameramen. This, under David MacDonald, is the largest unit of the kind. Laboratories in Cairo process its rushes which can therefore be viewed by the technicians on the spot. No. 2 unit, with the First Army in Tunisia, has its rushes despatched by air for processing at Pinewood, whence it gets detailed reports by cable. This section is under Geoffrey Keating and consists of three directors and thirty cameramen.

Each section is a self-contained unit operating under control of the Assistant Director of Public Relations at Army H.Q. Thus each unit on the field works in close liaison with, but not under the direction of the local H.Q. of the area in which it is operating. It is self-supporting in all matters, including transport—the latter is obviously a pre-requisite of real independence of action. The remaining two sections are much smaller—No. 3, attached to Home Forces, consists of three cameramen only, while No. 4, attached to an Airborne Division, has four cameramen and one director, Paul Fletcher. Both these sections retain their independent status, that is, they are answerable to P.R.2, but naturally work in close liaison with G.H.Q. Home Forces or the Divisional O.C. The Army Film and Photographic Service has, besides these four units, two cameramen who operate independently, one at Gibraltar and the other at Malta. The whole organisation has to be a fluid one—adaptable to meet any possible changes in the war situation.

The cameramen of the A.F.P.S. are trained soldiers of high medical category with the rank of sergeant. They have been through the full battle-training course as well as the special training needed to make a cameraman, though naturally a number of them were cameramen in civilian life. One-third of the personnel of No. 1 unit, in fact, had such previous professional experience, but No. 2 unit is made up wholly of men new to camera work as a profession.

These men are to be thought of as soldiers using a specialised weapon—the cine camera, or in some cases the still camera. They are not simply cameramen who have been put in uniform. As a result, the Army film man is part of the social group whose activities he records—he knows it and feels it; and he needs to be tough if he

is to match up to the mobility and staying power of the trained soldier. This invokes a basic principle of documentary—that the technician must be in touch with the people he puts on the screen. The full value of this principle can only be brought out if the film technicians make use of it. They must not be content with showing the bare military implications of what the soldier does; the soldier's life as a man—or woman—is very relevant to the Army story.

The Director of Public Relations is Major-General Lord Burnham; he has the qualification of being a soldier by profession, and a knowledge of the Press, derived from his previous association with the *Daily Telegraph*. The department P.R.2 under Ronald Tritton is responsible for film propaganda. Contact is kept with the Ministry of Information, and there are fortnightly meetings at the War Office with its Film Officer, Mr. Jack Beddington, where questions common to both organisations are discussed.

One interesting feature of broader developments is that two film directors have been loaned to the Indian Government at the request of the latter. It was felt that Army activities in India required better cover than they were getting, as indeed is evident enough from their absence on British screens. Here appears to be a much needed opportunity for developing a wider awareness in this country of one side of the Indian scene. But that is up to the Indian Government, and P.R.2 is more concerned with affairs here.

As has been mentioned, one of the users of the film material administered by P.R.2 is the Army Film Unit at Pinewood, under Hugh Stewart. (Here nearly all technicians are experienced professionals.) Besides film production and the issue of reports to the A.F.P.S. they run a school at which British, American, Canadian, Polish, Dutch and Norwegian soldiers are trained as cameramen—at present some 45 men are being so trained. From the pool thus formed cameramen are sent, when fully trained as described earlier, to feed units posted away.

Feature Films

Directors return to Pinewood to finish their films. Up till a little while ago the Army Film Unit concentrated on short films which could do little more than portray various sides of Army life—not to imply that this was unimportant. For with our military activities developing hopefully, let us say, rather than inspiringly, the simple informational film had its value. Now that the war is developing as a series of major campaigns, the policy of P.R.2 is to make feature length films to tell the campaign story. *Desert Victory* was the first of these, and is soon to be followed by the story of Tunisia.

At Pinewood, too, the R.A.F. and Crown Film Units have their headquarters, and the studio can thus form a useful common meeting ground. There is also contact here with some American Units. Mutual contact with them, not to mention other Allied Service organisations, is felt to be very desirable. The American forces show a wide-awake appreciation of the importance of films; but this appears to be correlated with a many-sided organisation, with which mutual dealings would be easier, were there some centre for direct approaches.

Apart from Pinewood, other users are the M.O.I. who need library material for a large number of their films. They get it, of course, without charge. Also commercial producers sometimes make use of it, paying at the usual commercial rate.

Important users are the newsreel companies, who get material free. This arrangement is justified in that the Army obtains through the newsreels a good deal of valuable screen time. (An example of the speed of working required to meet newsreel conditions is the 5½-hour job on Churchill's North African visit. The undeveloped rushes arrived at 11 a.m. They were processed and screened for the

Film Progress in the Services (continued)

Censor, to whose requirements the negative had to be cut; five censored lavenders were wanted, one for each of the five newsreel companies; and they saw the censored positive at 4.20 p.m.)

To all censor's screenings of rush material come representatives of A.K.S.—the Army Kinematography Services. They are another of the group of users served by P.R.2, and quite separate from it; they handle all the Army training films.

From information derived from its Policy and Planning branch (A.K.1) it is possible to give an idea of the trend of development of A.K.S.

As regards the scope of work hitherto undertaken it can be said that in the main all of the Primary Training subjects have been covered by films. (Primary Training is that basic training given to every recruit during his first six weeks of service in the Army. It includes such things as ordinary foot drill, gas drill, the use of such weapons as rifle, bayonet, grenade, Lewis gun, and so on.) The type of film made until a few months ago has been the straightforward instructional, the production of these being handled by 12-15 commercial companies.

A.K.2(b) is the department of A.K.S. which deals with production by commercial companies. These instructionals were wanted quickly and companies which had experience in producing quota shorts were given the job of producing many of them. Without seeing a representative selection of the films it is of course impossible to do more than guess how effective such qualifications are for this kind of work. In their practical application these films brought out certain principles. The soldier is interested in the real matter of this kind of film—he wants to learn his job. It used to be common practice to put into instructional films humorous asides, attuned as it was thought to the soldier's outlook. In fact the soldier found them unwelcome intrusions—particularly after he had seen them a few times. The practice has been given up, and in the same way other principles, long accepted by people who know documentary, have been validated.

Training Films

The trend now is towards films whose approach to training is tactical—that is to say, they show the use of a given weapon, or special procedure, not as something on its own, but in tactical relations with other activities. It is clear that the demands of invasion landings, for example, are bound to include a very full appreciation of the inter-relations between groups. One may imagine for a moment the intricacies of landing a mere fraction of the Sicilian invasion force—say a thousand men. Ammunition, weapons, transport vehicles, telephone and radio sets, food and medical supplies, the right number of the right specialists—the provision and administration of all these has to be linked with Naval and Air Force spheres of activity to make one coherent plan of attack. Then the fighting could start. The unique role, in preparation for this work, which can be filled by well-made films, demands full recognition of their worth.

The problem of security came to the fore with this new type of film, whose production obviously entailed the film technicians being in close touch with military developments. Fox Studios at Wembley were taken over, and A.K.3—the department of A.K.S. concerned with the Army's own direct production—installed there. Thorold Dickinson, who made *Next of Kin* when he was at Ealing, and Carol Reed were in this department. While he was there—both he and Dickinson have since left—Carol Reed made a film, *The New Lot*. Its purpose was to show how all types of men, who might at first sight seem unlikely to fit well into Army life, can in fact settle down far more happily than they thought they would. It can do much to counter the "browning off" which may well arise before a man has been trained up in the job found for him by the Army Selection procedure. A film has also been made for the A.T.S., to show the different kinds of work available to them. Such films are made in close consultation with Army psychiatrists. This is an ex-

ample of how the Army needs to have its own special problems of morale smoothed out by films—we shall see a similar thing later in the R.A.F.—but in many cases these films can be of value to civilian audiences as well. The success of *Next of Kin* will be remembered, but until *The New Lot* has been viewed one cannot judge whether it has equal merit.

The branching out of the training film into the "morale" film is linked with difficult but vital problems. The outlook of troops a long way from home, of troops who may later be living in now enemy-occupied territory, and their approach later to questions of demobilisation, needs to be informed by good sense which films can do much to augment. It is, of course, essential that all such films be absolutely faithful to the character and outlook of the people they portray.

The more direct training films of the new tactical type are now the main occupation of A.K.2(a). At Wembley there are three to four military film units—the production organisation necessarily has to be fluid. The producer—whose position is at present unfilled—has the rank of Major. (It took a little time incidentally to sort out what rank the various technicians were to have; films make their own peculiar demands upon any rigid organisation.) These military units cover exercises and, at Infantry Schools, new tactics and drills directly these have been laid down. Thus they can bring on to the screen every new set of procedure—or "drill"—as it appears. It is appreciated now that only the best instructors should be consulted on training film production; experience makes them more film minded, with increased efficiency resulting.

Training films are made of an average running time of 20 minutes, to fit training periods of 40 minutes. The rate of film production is given as approximately 100 a year.

Films can also be used to bring to the screen new developments which may arise in distant theatres of war. Two cameramen are travelling with a special commission of inquiry which is investigating such matters in certain areas of the Far East.

It is interesting that films can bring new "drills" to the soldier before pamphlets can. It takes about two months to get a film into general circulation, whereas to train instructors, to provide pamphlets and training equipment takes a month longer. Offset against this is the difficulty of keeping films up to date. Since very few "drills" remain set for long, with the Army's tendency to ever-increasing elasticity of organisation, this seems to demand a remedy. The difficulty of solution is not to be glossed over but the same problem on a smaller scale has often been the worry of non-theatrical distributors who have had to handle different versions of films, or films with different sets of titles. It should be possible to devise an organisation which keeps a close check on distribution of copies, and withdraws outdated films for amendment when necessary.

The distribution and exhibition of films is run by A.K.4. They have got over the early trouble, common to all the services, of lack of equipment. Now there are 150 mobile projectors in addition to those installed at every training establishment, most of which are 35 mm. machines. Together, with A.K.5, who get the recreational films and give entertainment shows for the Directorate of Army Welfare and Education, they give 15,000 shows a week. Projectionists—many of whom are A.T.S. girls—are trained at Wembley.

Naval Films

In the Admiralty, as a whole, we see a rather different approach to the film. It is used solely in relation to training. All propaganda and Admiralty public relations films are produced by the M.O.I., or by newsreel companies whose cameramen operate by special arrangement on H.M. ships. The production of the training film is in the hands of the Training and Staff Duties Division of the Naval staff. The Director of this Division is Captain Oram; in his hands is the co-ordination of the work of the Division, and its integration with the Admiralty needs. In charge of the Film Section is Commander John Hunt.

As all the film production energies of the Admiralty are thus
(continued overleaf)

Film Progress in the Services (continued)

concentrated on training, one sees in the Division a more intense development in this field than appears elsewhere.

In general, these training films are made by outside commercial companies, but, on occasion they are made by the Royal Naval Film Section at Plymouth. This is the Admiralty's own training-film production unit, which supplements production carried on by the trade. Little information is available about its activities except that its personnel consists of a total of 30-40 people. It has grown in size, and the organisation from time to time has been adapted to meet changing demands.

The film is considered as part of a procedure designed to impart, in the shortest possible time, the information a man requires to learn his job. Other training techniques must also be used with a full understanding of their capabilities and limitations. The film is one; the film strip,* blackboard, and demonstration on equipment, are others.

Film and film strips

So that all these devices shall be used to best advantage, the functions and necessary qualities of the film and film strip are described in two documents—"Notes on the Design and Construction of Instructional Films",—issued by the Director of Training and Staff Duties. They are both outstandingly good compilations, and it is reassuring to know that they have been circulated to the other Services, to Government Departments and other interested organisations. They are "issued as a guide for those concerned in preparing and producing these valuable contributions to efficient training. They are based upon present knowledge, which is still in a theoretical stage: they should not therefore be read in a rigid sense but rather as a formulation of current opinion and, as such, liable to extension or revision as experience dictates." Part I is concerned with the film itself; an introduction says: "As a first and cardinal principle it must be recognised that the purpose of an instructional film is to teach and, if it is to present a clear picture, it must be shorn of all extraneous material that is not essential to the subject. There is a tendency to blur the instructional value of films by building the subject round a story. The argument put forward to justify this practice hinges upon a plausible theory that men under training need a titivation of interest. It is, however, entirely wrong to attract attention to a manufactured story which purports to provide human interest if, in doing so, attention is distracted from the subject that is being taught. Mental alertness must be aroused by interest in the subject and it should be the main purpose of the designer of an instructional film to see that the subject is made interesting." It is a pity that this sound sense had not earlier permeated the organisations concerned with Service training films.

Part II deals with the 'still synopsis', a film strip which summarises a film in a number of still pictures with sub-titles. "The primary purpose of a 'still synopsis' is to recapture the salient features of instruction and rivet them on the memory. The criterion of its work is the amount of 'sticking power' it gives to the scraps of information that it imparts" (—from the same document). Thus each still has to be carefully selected so that it will bring back to mind a key piece of information. This can act as a reminder of a sequence of ideas which depended on and arose from that piece of information in the original film.

The film strip is also—but less frequently—used as an entity in itself—i.e., not as a synopsis of a film but as an "Instructional still". It is, of course, fully understood that the film strip (used in either of the above ways) is definitely not a substitute for a film: it is made in a different way, from a different point of view, for a different, but important purpose. For example it cannot show essential movements

* The "film strip" is a strip of cine film, a few feet long, which carries on its standard cine frames a series of stills and titles. They are thrown on to a screen by means of a simple, specially designed projector in the same way as lantern slides would be. Film strip projection has a great advantage over the magic lantern in that the apparatus is far lighter and more compact, and the stills cannot be projected in any other than the correct order.

in an operation, nor can it effectively give that integration of one part of a process with the whole, so necessary with complex procedures. The film can do both. On the other hand, with the film strip, a class can take notes during its showing; and it can be used effectively for revision purposes. The film cannot be so used. The two devices are complementary. Nearly every film used has its film synopsis, and those lacking one will soon have it.

It is impossible to give exact figures, but roughly, the number of British made films in use is about 350, with something like 50 films in production. There are some 400 British made film strips and film synopses in use. A large number of American films are used too—about 1,100 film strips and film synopses, and rather fewer films. It must be remembered that these figures are very fluid, for films go out of circulation and fresh productions are continually being added.

(Continued on page 213)

NOTES OF THE MONTH

WE HOPE that the Films Division of the M.O.I. is checking up the extent to which distributors are honouring their undertaking to show the new monthly 15-minute films. Some people believe that the change over from weekly 5-minuters to the monthly series was a retrogressive step into which the Films Division was tricked by Wardour Street at its wildest. Regular cinema-goers in London's West End report that to see a M.O.I. film is an extremely rare experience. During the first week of release of a recent issue of the "Into Battle" series, the programme particulars of two of the biggest London cinemas showed that in one case the M.O.I. film was shown only at 11.40 a.m. and the other cinema was not showing it at all, but nevertheless had found room to include in its programme a recruiting film for the U.S. Air Training Corps. The inclusion of this film in the programme seemed to demonstrate that there was no question of giving preference to a film with box-office appeal, for it proved on viewing to be unbelievably dull and completely without interest in this country. The cynical observer may be forgiven for frequently feeling that the war effort of the leaders of the exhibiting and distributing sides of the British film industry is more apparent in their speeches than on their screens. Yet if these films are not being widely shown, it is the Ministry of Information which must take principal blame. Ministry officials are much too timid in their dealings with the black sheep of an industry which on the whole is keen to pull its weight.

Comings and Goings

J. D. DAVIDSON has joined the Films Division of the M.O.I. Davidson is already proving as practical and tireless in his organisation of M.O.I. production as he was in the days when he was laying the foundation of Documentary's technical methods with the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit. Basil Wright has left for a six months' visit to Ottawa where he will assist John Grierson in the development of ambitious plans on behalf of the Canadian Government. Geoffrey Bell (director of *Transfer of Power*, *Fire Guard*, *Control Room*, and Secretary of the London Scientific Film Society) has joined the Board of D.N.L. Increased activity in the field of Documentary generally and the movements of key personnel are making difficult the regular production of D.N.L. (for everyone concerned very much of a spare-time job). We shall continue, however, to publish as frequently as possible and we hope that our readers will sympathise with us in our difficulties.

You Have Been Warned

Airforce, Howard Hawks' large scale feature film for Warner Brothers, did not quite get the press it deserved in this country, and few critics noted the significance of its shape and method of treatment, both of which stemmed more from the documentary stable than any Hollywood script or show copy has done since the *Grapes of Wrath*. *Airforce* is not in the same class as the Stein epic, but it is

NOTES OF THE MONTH (Cont.)

significant in the brutal casualness of Dudley Nichol's story, which, by and large, keeps very much to the hard realities attendant on flying a bomber across the Pacific Islands immediately after Pearl Harbour. "Love interest" and "story value" have both been jettisoned, with the result that there is a mounting instead of a diminishing sense of realism. This is thrown all the more into relief by the final reel, apparently added by a tycoon with cold feet, in which a batch of Flying Fortresses sink every ship in the Japanese Navy and Merchant Fleet twice over and are patted on the back by Hollywood, Abraham Lincoln, Elmer Davis and Uncle Tom Okum and all. But despite this, *Airforce* may well be seen as an encouraging portent of things to come.

Films in the Services

THE ARTICLE on Film Progress in the Services which we publish in this issue is the first attempt at a complete and authoritative statement on this subject. It is based on official statements made to our representative and we do not claim it to be exhaustive. There is, for example, no reference to the film activities of the Army Educa-

tion Services which we know to be most enlightened and forward-looking. We hope in the future to carry our present survey one stage further by viewing a representative collection of the Services films which are being made and by investigating the conditions under which they are being shown. In the meantime our readers in the Services will know best what divergencies exist between theory and practice.

Science and the Films

THE FORMATION of the English Scientific Film Association, announced on another page, is a step forward in the interpretation of science to the public. An organisation such as this can do much to give a new meaning to science, showing it as something of interest and value to the ordinary man, rather than the cult of veiled and often harmful mysteries which he is often led to suppose constitutes the meaning of "science". The recent increase in the number of Scientific Film Societies has shown that a focus of interest exists which is capable of great expansion if given organised expression. We wish the English Scientific Film Association every success in its aim to develop this healthy interest in the world of real things.

FILM PROGRESS IN THE SERVICES (Cont.)

It is most satisfactory to note that experiments have been carried out to find something of the relative value of these visual aids. Details are not available for publication until full confirmation of the validity of method is forthcoming, from its application in normal use. One can say, however, that the experiments were carried out in collaboration with Admiralty psychologists, and that 700 pupils were used.

As regards proposals for the immediate future the Division plans to get every Naval Training syllabus covered by films and film synopses.

Air Force Films

Film production in the Royal Air Force lays relatively less emphasis on the training film than do either of the other two Services, though the pattern of organisation is broadly similar to that of the Army. (The parallel of small beginnings holds good too; R.A.F. film production started simply as an historical record-keeping establishment.) As in the Army, there is a Public Relations branch, this time called P.R.1, which deals with films; in charge, is Wing Commander Twist. Cameramen send in from the battlefields of the Middle East, to Pinewood, their war front rushes. Pinewood distributes the material to its users. These include the newsreels and M.O.I., the R.A.F. Film Production Unit and "T films"—the branch of the Air Ministry Training Directorate concerned with getting films made by outside concerns. One valuable use of film has been in training for aircraft recognition. Particularly when the Americans came over with numbers of new aircraft types, speedy instruction in recognition became pressing.

As we have seen before, the internal "morale" film is linked to the training film, though here some are made by the R.A.F. Film Production Unit, not exclusively, as in the Army, by the Training Department. An example is a film called *Jumps Ahead*, intended to prepare paratroopers for action. The film shows what paratroopers are going to go through in their training, and generally gives an impression of the way of life peculiar to this new activity. The film has

the job of cultivating the paratroopers' outlook. Since they carry out paratroop training, the R.A.F. produced the film.

Another interesting use of the internal "morale" film is the monthly cinemagazine—called "The Gen"—which gives a picture of what different parts of the Air Force are doing. It is valuable for showing at stations posted in outlying parts; personnel are kept in touch with what is going on in the organisation as a whole, and can feel they are part of a group who breathe the same air.

The R.A.F. Film Unit works at Pinewood under the operational direction of P.R.1. (It may be a pointer to the importance attached to films by the R.A.F. that the film work of Public Relations is handled by a department so numbered.) It is found convenient for the catering and other ancillary services at Pinewood to be run by one organisation, so such work is done by R.A.F. personnel, for the Crown and the Army Film Units, as well as for the R.A.F. Unit itself; thus there are at Pinewood appreciably more R.A.F. than Army personnel.

One major occupation of the R.A.F. Film Unit arises from the fact that film records are made of most of the important operations, with the exception of those exclusively involving fighter planes. It is interesting to see how the special character of air warfare demands extensive use of film. The highly technical nature of Air Force operations means that results of all kinds—bombing, strafing, air combat—must be scientifically analysed by skilled men. They cannot observe results directly except possibly on rare occasions; and in any case direct observation would give very inadequate data owing to their instantaneous nature. So the cine camera is used to bring back a permanent record which can be studied in full detail. One fact arising from this is that people in responsible positions in the R.A.F. have grown to appreciate the value of film as a war weapon. Another point of interest is that many of these film records, or stills from them, have been released for publication, and by them the general public have been given a striking picture of modern aeronautical developments. (Stills are commonly taken from films; in most

R.A.F. photography it would be difficult to select the best moment for a still shot, and the increased "picture value" of a still, taken from the right moment in a film, easily makes up for loss of quality.)

Because of the value of their time to the community, it is usual for highly placed statesmen to travel, on matters of political significance, by air. As security in these circumstances is also of vital importance, it happens that the R.A.F. cover such news items both for record and news value. This was the case on the occasion of Molotov's visit; because of the need for full secrecy, as well as continuity in treatment, the same unit covered later incidents connected with the visit. This again is an indication of the increasing importance of the air as a new sphere of social movement. The film, from its nature of being essentially an expression of modern life follows closely in the track of developments in the air.

The General Trend

To summarise. We see, in the Army and the Air Force, that the power of film has become recognised, in a matter of two years, as something unique. The organisations for handling it are still developing, a large number of young men have been trained as film makers.

In the Air Force, the very dynamic nature of the work it does probably has the effect of selecting into that service mainly people whose personality has also a dynamic quality. They take readily to films. The relative lack of emphasis on the training film may arise because the skills needed for flying operations depend so much on bodily and mental agility—things which can only be acquired by doing rather than watching. As regards the use of the film internally the Admiralty appears to be doing work whose importance to the other services, and potentially to the community at large is very considerable. It is to be hoped that the silent tradition will not hamper the eventual spread to the wider educational fields of civilian life, of the knowledge that is being gained due to

(Continued on page 214)

Films in the Services (cont.)

the special war-time demand for efficient training.

The information (as opposed to the opinions) contained in this article has been obtained from the Services themselves and while, broadly speaking, it is possible to vouch for the statements made, there are various matters of degree and detail which would need a fuller investigation for their description in proper perspective.

From all the Service authorities concerned we have received in the preparation of this article very considerable co-operation and facilities. There is no reason to doubt that the information we have obtained accurately represents the intentions of all the Service units dealt with. *D.N.L.* has not infrequently in the past directed criticisms against the activities of various Service film organisations; and while our survey makes it apparent that many of the lunacies which marked the earlier stages of Service film making have been abolished, there may well be scope for considerable improvement as regards certain aspects of the work. In the meantime, it is most satisfactory to learn that the experience of the use of training films in the Army has been sufficiently successful to warrant official consideration being given now to the question of making training films a permanent factor in the Army after the war.

Particularly as regards the receiving end of Service film production, data are naturally not easy to come by. Apart from the praiseworthy Admiralty investigation, about which full information is not yet available, judgment of the effectiveness of the distribution of training and morale films must be reserved. It is here permissible to ask whether all officers concerned are sufficiently conscious that, however excellent the work done on the production side, it can be completely wasted if distribution methods and projection conditions are not equally well organised.

Obviously there are other difficulties which are bound to arise in Service film production and which are not easily solved. We may, for instance, refer to the possible difficulties of dovetailing the personal relationships between film makers with the disciplinary relations of Service personnel. The team work required for the making of a film is not the same as the discipline required for the efficient working of a military unit. Clearly the most obvious anomalies have, except in possibly a few cases, been dealt with; but it may be questioned whether the higher authorities have yet realised the full implications of this problem.

Finally, has inter-Services collaboration yet been developed to the degree which it should? No great emphasis appears to be laid on inter-Services collaboration at present. But this is surely highly necessary in view of the modern techniques of combined operations.

At Pinewood Studios where Services film personnel and the civilians of M.O.I.'s Crown Film Unit are working under one roof, there potentially exists the war's most significant development in factual film-making. But it is still only potential.

**DOCUMENTARY
NEWS LETTER**
Monthly Sixpence
Vol. 4 No. 5

HOLLYWOOD vs. BRITAIN

Reprinted by permission from *The Picturegoer*

WHAT part does Hollywood propose to play in the future of British films?

The query springs from the announcement that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer has "merged" its British subsidiary with the London film interests of Sir Alexander Korda.

The new deal means that M-G-M British, through which will come the necessary financial succour, has space in England's largest and most modern studios. It can draw upon Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer of Hollywood, for stars, directors, writers, producers and technicians which together are acknowledged to be the cream of Hollywood's motion picture talent.

No other British production concern, with or without help from some Hollywood combine, can hope to do better; few can hope to do as well.

I talked with Sir Alexander Korda as he packed his bags.

He acknowledged that "although my job for the present will be to sell Britain to U.S.A. and U.S.A. to Britain", the new merger represents Hollywood's initial step towards post-war rehabilitation of Anglo-American film production.

It doubtless is an astute preliminary to a world-wide alignment with the "New Economy" which we are told is to come after the war.

It reveals, at least, that Hollywood is planning ahead for the day when United Nations influence having usurped all Axis, as distinct from dictatorial influences, motion pictures as a cultural, as well as entertaining factor, will once again girdle the world...

The British Government and the British film industry are pre-occupied with the urgent business of war.

History repeats itself so far, with Hollywood, although part of U.S.A. at war, a haven of comparative peace and prosperity...

It was much the same during the last war, when the slight but flourishing British film industry died in khaki to be called back in spirit by the first British Quota Act of 1927.

Its "materialisation" never has led to the foundation of a British film industry, which in corporate unity and pseudo-competitive co-operation, offers a fair comparison to Hollywood, in terms of a potential film monopoly.

The British Film Producers Association never achieved for British films, what "the Hays Office" achieves for Hollywood. The British Government never has shown any significant grasp of the vital importance of a national film industry, for each and every great nation, *Britain included.*

Even admitting that the Conservative British Government of 1927, by enacting the "quota law" did for British films, more than Hollywood had ever received, or even requested of Washington, it still is true that, according to its problems and its needs, Hollywood *can* get, at beck and call, more action from Washington than British films have yet had cause to hope for, from Whitehall. The reason is that Hollywood is organised; is united and has its own trivial political machine ever at work, at home and abroad, to align its commercial and industrial policies with ever-changing world trends.

That is why today, M-G-M leads the rest of the Hollywood combines, in taking up a new and

slightly more strategic position on the playing fields of British films.

Already other foreign film production centres, including Soviet Russia, are being carefully examined by experts in Hollywood's employ, with a view to framing post-war policy.

Sir Alexander Korda tells me he will at once commence production of British films comparable to the most ambitious which he, and M-G-M British, have turned out in the past.

Shows like *Goodbye Mr. Chips*, *A Yank at Oxford*, *The Citadel*, *Four Feathers*, *The Thief of Bagdad* and so on, most of which, unlike many other tip-top British pictures, enjoyed United States release on terms fairly equal to those available to the best of Hollywood's films.

I am not saying that the quite considerable profits they earned in U.S. theatres, returned in any bulk to Great Britain. That is a point upon which native British film production chiefs like Arthur Rank, A. G. Allen, Michael Balcon, and the others may sharpen their wits.

If you like British films, you may feel like telling me that you are getting some jolly good ones; that you expect to keep on getting a "jolly sight" better and so what does it matter who makes them?

Your definition of "a British film" may be "a film made in Britain", or it may be "a film about Britain", or again, "a film produced by British capital and British labour." I don't know.

My definition of "a British film industry" is "a unity of British capital and creative talent, expressed in and through a united and enlightened industry, with the will and capacity to compete on equal terms against all foreign industries in its own line".

That would mean that it would build up its own stars, directors and writers to "international" significance.

It would maintain its own contacts, commercial and creative, in all the overseas countries which represent markets or potential markets for the type of British film which would express—in the way the Hollywood film expresses—something of the great country in which it originated and the characteristics and problems of the people there.

Then and then alone, could we hope, that British films might begin to do for Britain what Hollywood films have, for the past twenty years, been doing for the United States.

I speak now of a "cultural" force much too subtle to be referred to merely as "propaganda", which has made all Britain, America-conscious...

The British film could do the same in U.S.A. and elsewhere. But first it has to get on the American screens. At present it can do so only by consent of American film combines, ruled by Hollywood. Is it likely that Hollywood is going to work overtime to build up competition against itself?

Instead we may expect that by good business sense, Hollywood will, if possible, exert a controlling influence on British film production, to the end that such British films as *do* show in U.S.A. will not "get in the way" of Hollywood's own movies.

There is nothing especially sinister about this. It is big business, that is all.

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Inside Fascist Spain. March of Time No. 11. 18 mins.

Subject: Spain as it is to-day under the Fascist régime.

Treatment: March of Time at very nearly its best. "Very nearly" because the commentary lacks the richness and the subtle nuances of the commentaries of such earlier issues as *Inside Nazi Germany* and the famous item on Austria. The pictures are, however, among the most sensational that M.O.T. has ever brought to the screen. Pagès and Rebière, a team responsible for the best of March of Time's pre-war continental films, after escaping from France, succeeded in persuading the Spanish Government to allow them to make the most horrifying exposure of fascism in action that has yet reached the screen. The reason for the full facilities granted them was apparently that Franco officials (loath to allow pictures of depressed life in Spanish towns) were only too anxious to show how they had incarcerated thousands of their Republican enemies in the most nightmarishly modern prisons one has ever seen. Franco is apparently proud that, in his mercy, he has not wiped out every single democrat but has been content to massacre only in hundreds of thousands. The prison interiors, beautifully photographed by Rebière, have all the glaring white claustrophobic impact of Room's *Ghost That Never Returns*. Here we see perpetrated the ultimate horror of fascism. Musicians—ex-members of the State Orchestras under the Republic—are compelled to play fascist airs as members of a prison orchestra formed to entertain teeming Republican prisoners. Imprisoned journalists who worked on democratic papers are compelled to turn out a fascist sheet of "redemption" for the "re-education" of prisoners. The children of imprisoned democrats are shown being trained, almost from the day they can walk, to perform outrageously militaristic evolutions in fantastic comic-opera uniforms. There is scarcely a scene without its priest or nun underlining the full significance of this attack by ancient and modern methods (the inquisition as well as the concentration camp) upon the minds rather than the bodies of men.

Propaganda value: Inestimable, wherever it is shown.

The Crown of the Year. Green Park Productions. **Director:** Ralph Keene. **Assoc. Producer:** Edgar Anstey. **Camera:** Ray Elton and Reg. Wyer. M.O.I. 20 mins. non-T. 15 mins. T.

Subject: The harvest.

Treatment: As rich and satisfying as the soil itself is Keene's final film chapter of the four seasons. It is visually beautiful, yet there is no forgetting of toil and planning, nor are practical considerations neglected for the sake of romanticism, that bogey which seems always to be hanging around when the town looks at the country. We see the fruits of the earth being gathered, and implicit in the shooting is the sweat that has gone to their growing. Official planning makes its appearance; but for once on the screen it is concerned with understandable fact; the plan of the farm is looked at, the river land is to be ploughed up to add to the nation's food supply. The film is commented by the farmer and often as we have nattered at the use of the unprofessorial commentator, we have to admit that this one is perfect. His voice has a warm country flavour but every word is clear and there is no need of the

usual ear trumpet and glossary. The makers have carefully avoided the bountiful Mother Nature ending by carrying the film on to the toil and preparation for next year's harvest. The music by William Alwyn is as rich and satisfying as the picture.

Propaganda value: It is good for any country to have some things to boast about and the progress of British agriculture during this war is one of them. This film does its subject justice. Although we have no agricultural land as spectacular as prairies or steppes, we seem to be leading the world in one aspect of the important job of making much out of little.

Breathing Space. **Producer:** Alex Shaw. **Director:** Charles de Lautour. **Camera:** Charles Marlborough. **Editor:** Alan Osbiston. Strand Films. M.O.I. for U.S.S.R. 30 mins.

Subject: British entertainment and culture in relation to her war-time effort.

Treatment: The manner and the matter of this film both arise from its specific purpose which is to explain one side of our life in Britain to our allies in Russia. The activities depicted include bands in the Parks and Trafalgar Square, Art exhibitions, a National Gallery concert, a dance at a Service aerodrome, a factory canteen concert, and suchlike. The commentary being in Russian, a language of which your reviewer knows exactly five words, one of them indelicate, the full import of the descriptive part of the film (which is obviously a vital part of it) could not be assessed during projection. Subsequent enquiries, however, indicated that the scenes of leisure depicted were not allowed to deceive our Allies into thinking that we were only half at war. The visuals indeed, even without commentary, have been carefully selected to emphasise the urgencies of effort in which our wartime culture and entertainment are framed. De Lautour has directed the film with skill and sensitivity, aided and abetted by first-class camera work and editing. The cogency of the results obtained varies with the subjects treated, which, as already indicated, swing from the sublime to the meticulous: in the former category come the factory concert sequence (the best thing in the film) and an impressive montage of British tanks in action with an Elgar "Pomp and Circumstance" as sound: the latter is represented by an over-long and not over-cheerful canteen-dance at an airfield, and by a semi-imaginative presentation of the genesis and plugging of an Addinsell song-hit.

Propaganda value: If the Russians today want a picture of the English not taking their pleasures sadly, this will be very useful. The film goes no further than this, and is presumably designed to fit in with others dealing with other aspects.

Close Quarters. **Production:** Crown Film Unit. **Direction:** Jack Lee. **Camera:** Jonah Jones. M.O.I. 75 mins.

Subject: A routine patrol of a submarine. **Treatment:** A similar film to *Target for Tonight*, *Ferry Pilot* and *Coastal Command*, and the best of the lot, although it is bound to suffer coming as it does two months after *We Dive at Dawn*. The real-life crew are very well directed by Jack Lee and brilliantly photographed by our old chum Jonah Jones. *Close Quarters* in many ways gives a better idea of what it must be like to dive and live under water than does its studio counterpart. There are a number of details that

suddenly make you think of the 100 or 150 feet of water overhead: a mix from a truck out of the port-hole of the supply ship to a close-up of the closed hatch of the conning tower and a pan down to the crew; the aimless walk of the captain in a moment of tension; the conning-tower hatch closing; the crew sleeping in a heap on the floor; the surprising width of the fore-deck; the reactions of the crew to the depth charges.

In *Close Quarters* the torpedoes are fired almost casually—in *We Dive at Dawn* with a great deal of manoeuvring and aiming. They both can't be right surely.

Propaganda Value: Home and abroad excellent, but was it necessary to have two films on the same subject? The M.O.I. must have known that *We Dive at Dawn* was nearly finished when they commissioned *Close Quarters*.

We Dive at Dawn. **Production:** Gaumont British. **Direction:** Anthony Asquith. **Camera:** Jack Cox.

We Dive at Dawn is a first class studio documentary, excellent dialogue, casting, photography, sets, acting and direction. Some people complain about the home-life sequences and they are stagey—and not particularly well thought out—but they are well intentioned and seriously presented. The trouble may be that very few English actors have the vaguest idea of how anyone below a duchess behaves in normal circumstances, and as script writers suffer from the same fault, working-class home life in films usually ends up as a caricature of the real thing.

All the sequences on the submarine are extremely good, the sailors and officers are well built up as individuals, and the vast amount of technical material which might have been dull, is handled so well that it becomes really exciting.

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SIGHT and SOUND

SUMMER ISSUE

FILMS IN SWEDEN
A PLEA for D. W. GRIFFITH
CHILDREN'S CINEMA
EIRE

6d.

Published by: The British Film Institute,
4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1.

Documentary Films contd.

The torpedoing of the *Brandenburg* is nearly all technical detail but it is done so well that it becomes easily the best sequence of the whole film and most likely one of the best action sequences ever.

All that remains to be done is to compliment Anthony Asquith both for a good honest film and for his adaptability and to regret that the film didn't finish when the *Sea Tiger* came in sight of the pilot boat.

The Silent Village. Crown Film Unit. *Producer-Director:* Humphrey Jennings. *Camera:* H. Fowle. *Editing:* S. MacAllister. M.O.I. 36 mins. *Subject:* What might have happened if a Welsh mining village had been in Czechoslovakia when the Germans went in, or alternatively, what might have happened if Lidice had been a Welsh mining village.

Treatment: It is very difficult to say anything against this film without getting involved with its subject. The tragedy of Lidice is world famous, and like many great tragedies it has both horrified and uplifted mankind. But tragedy demands genius for its interpretation. In this film we have sensitivity, good taste and cinematic technique, and occasionally these combine to produce moments of feeling. But that seems scarcely enough.

Propaganda Value: It is impossible to imagine why this film was made. The strangely oblique approach robs the film of any direct impact because it has been translated into "It might have been like this" not "It was like this". It has moments of aesthetic and technical interest but this certainly does not seem the time for the tentative and the semi-obscure.

World of Plenty. *Production:* Paul Rotha Productions Ltd. *Script:* Eric Knight and Paul Rotha. *Associate Director:* Yvonne Fletcher. *Additional Dialogue:* Miles Malleon. *Music:* William Alwyn. M.O.I. 46 mins.

Surveying from almost stratospheric height the problem of Man and Food, *The World of Plenty* marshals citizen and scientist, fact and forecast in a brilliant display of cinematic technique. Aided by animated diagram, trick optical and Messrs John Orr, Woolton, Easterbrook and Emmett with President Roosevelt and Henry Wallace thrown in for good measure, the film tells us of the past present and future of the world larder.

Man depends on the land and its produce. This fact is easily forgotten in peacetime city living, but in war is grimly remembered. No one toiling on an allotment is likely to overlook the connection between sweat and dinner, and the almost universal nostalgia for steak and onions suggests a lively interest in the food situation. Therefore *World of Plenty* starts with an initial advantage, we go to see it prepared to listen to what it has to say. And it has got a lot to say. It says that before the war people starved in one place while food was destroyed in another, that children went without, while crops rotted in the fields for lack of a market. It tells of a world of waste and inefficiency, a world where food meant money and not life. The story is told by two men—a commentator and a heckler. The first puts across a smooth, urbane story of supply and demand, an official tale in which apples and cows are divorced from their real meaning. The heckler interrupts him, makes him explain and amplify. When they come to a difficult point

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THE WOLF ON HIS DEATH-BED



A Wolf lay at the last gasp, and glanced at the events of his past life. "True, I am a sinner," said he; "but let me still hope, not one of the greatest. I have done harm; but also much good. Once, I remember, a bleating Lamb, which had wandered from the flock, came so near me, that I could easily have throttled it; and yet I did nothing to it. At the same time I listened to the jeers and jibes of a Sheep with the most surprising indifference, although I had no watchful Dogs to fear."

"I can explain all that," interrupted his friend the Fox, who was assisting in preparing him for death.

"I have a distinct recollection of all the attendant circumstances. It was precisely the time that you so lamentably choked yourself with the bone, which the kind-hearted Crane afterwards drew out of your throat."

REALIST FILM UNIT

47 OXFORD STREET, W.1

Telephone: GERRARD 1958

Movies are Important to Russia

From New Movies (National Board of Review Magazine)

A DRAMATIC explanation of what movies mean to war-time Russia can be found in two seemingly contradictory news items of recent date. One reported that Soviet actors, directors, etc., are not drafted for military service. The other noted that thirty cameramen lost their lives in filming *One Day at War*, shown in the U.S.A. as a March of Time release.

Yet there is no contradiction. Morale films, fictional features, historical dramas, comedies, must be made behind the lines, and made by the best creative and technical talent available. At the same time, faithful to Dovzhenko's words, "the Soviet camera records the visual aspect of war completely and unflinchingly." Unflinchingly means, among other things, a cameraman loaded down with heavy equipment in the thick of the actual fighting, getting footage, at the cost of his life, footage which will prevent some care-free young critic from complaining: "But we don't see any Germans in the shots of infantry advancing."

Yes, both kinds of movie-making go on apace in Russia. It went on throughout one of the toughest sieges in all history as we may discover in *Siege of Leningrad*, currently being presented to American audiences.

Grim and death-defying kind of documentary photography also went on while Stalingrad rose in triumph from its ashes. On this point, Roman Karmen, one of the Soviet's ace newsreel men, writes:

"When our gunners had pulled their guns into the streets to fire point-blank at the enemy and it was clear that the Germans at Stalingrad had very few hours left to live, we newsreel photographers worked feverishly to use every moment of waning light of that short winter day. In order to cover all sectors of the front; fifteen of us were distributed among various Red Army units.

"Our cameras caught not only the street fighting but the mass surrender of German officers and men. . . . We filmed the surrender of Field-Marshal von Paulus. We also recorded the surrender of Lieutenant-General von Daniel. The camera caught him walking down the street, followed by a file of luggage-laden officers. So on the epic of Stalingrad will unfold on the screen. The film will show not only the siege of Stalingrad, but the majestic epilogue, a meeting of soldiers and civilians in the central square of the liberated and heroic city."

For America

Other documentaries, completed and soon to be available for American release, are *Black Sea Fighters* and *Russians at War*. The first of these was edited, very likely in Tashkent, from footage shot by cameramen assigned to the Black Sea Fleet. It describes the patrol work, landing parties, reconnaissance and offensive and defensive operations of a large naval force, but this is no mere full-length instructional film. It is a tense, emotional portrait of men and ships, alternating the sweat of engine rooms with the ice of wintry seas above decks. During a sequence of battle with Nazi fighting craft one sees a Soviet sailor burst through a doorway with flames streaming from his back—a human firebrand. No effort is made in the film to conceal the damage done by combat and weather, but the final

impression is that nothing will ever drive the Soviet Black Sea Fleet out of its native waters.

On the fictional front, Soviet films continue to show vast variety and vitality. *Diary of a Nazi* is the newest of the out-and-out war dramas to reach the United States. It traces the unsavoury career of a blackshirt S.S. Regiment through Poland, Czechoslovakia and the south of Russia. The remnants of the regiment end up as prisoners of the Red Army.

One of the most unusual items on the production agenda of the Alma-Ata studio in Central Asia is a film to be called *Wait For Me*, based on a poem of the same name, by Konstantin Simonov, war correspondent and playwright, who is doing the script. The author of this tender poetic concept also wrote *A Lad From Our Town*, a historical film dealing with the Civil War hero, Kotovsky.

Historical Films

This (Kotovskiy) film is part of a cycle of historical subjects which the Russian industry feels is excellently calculated to give deeper roots to the fighting patriotism of the average Russian. Eisenstein, a director known to Americans for his *Potemkin*, shown to many audiences here, is putting finishing touches on his *Ivan the Terrible*, concerning himself not so much with the monarch's eccentricities and cruelties, but with his efforts to occidentalise Russia and to import some of the fruits of Renaissance culture such as printing, chemistry, etc.

The Tashkent studio have finished *Sukhe-Bator*, the story of a national hero of the Mongolian People's Republic and in Ashkhabad, on the Iranian border, a studio has completed *How the Steel was Tempered*, adapted from Ostrovsky's novel about the German occupation of the Ukraine in 1918. In Stalinabad, a biographical film is being made about Lermontov, Russia's great nineteenth century poet. It's a short jump, in any studio, from a nineteenth century poet to a twentieth century composer, by virtue whereof Alma-Ata is working on a film called *Leningrad Symphony*, which uses the creation of the Seventh Symphony by Shostakovich as the background of its story. The script is by Alexei Kapler, war correspondent for *Red Star*.

This list could be made longer. Certainly it should include V. I. Pudovkin's production, *The Face of Fascism*, based on short stories by the anti-Nazi German writer, Berthold Brecht; a full-length satire on the Nazi armies entitled *New Adventures of the Good Soldier Schweik*; and a film tentatively titled *Who Is She?* based on the heroic life and death of 17-year-old girl guerilla, Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, who was executed by the Nazis.

Comedies

The Russians have their comedies, too, but most of them don't find their way to this country because the popular humour of almost any country is too idiomatic for successful exportation. Even these comedies, you may be sure, deal with the war and make Nazis harassed by the Russian winter and Soviet guerillas, the butt of their humour.

It will be observed that none of the films

touched on herein is completely divorced from the war or from the broader aspects of Russian patriotism. Notice, too, that some of the scenarios are by war correspondents. Apparently the Russians do not feel the need for films of escape, a form of moral therapy recommended in other lands as an excellent lift to the war-time spirit for soldiers and civilians alike. The real key to the shaping of Soviet film fare in war-time may be found in the earnest and inspiring call of Alexander Dovzhenko to the world's film makers:

"Film workers, don't varnish the world of today. Do not 'make it up' out of your imaginings. The world is now very ill. Do not divert your art to trivial, individual matters. The cinema must and can give the answer to the sorest, sharpest contemporary problems. It must, honestly help suffering mankind to find its bearings."

60 Films a Month on Science and War

(From the Metropolitan Motion Picture Bulletin)

By Peter Furst

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Leonid Antonov, special representative of the Russian motion picture industry, and himself a producer and director, now in Hollywood to study American film production and to purchase a number of American-made films, reports that his country plans to produce at least 100 full-length feature films, 10 full-length documentaries and more than 700 short subjects in 1943.

The short subjects, dealing primarily with science and the war subjects, are now being produced at the rate of 60 a month, the Russian producer declared.

Feature films include *Lidice*, the story of the destruction of the Czech village; *Mendel*, story of a Jewish shoemaker who becomes a hero in the eyes of the Soviet people; *Flight over Berlin* and an as yet untitled film based on a story by Mark Twain. One full-length film already produced is *Defence of Stalingrad*, which Antonov said will be released in this country soon.

While cameramen in the Soviet Union today are right up in the front lines with the army—with the result that many have already lost their lives—creative artists are still deferred from direct military service since the Government recognises their immense morale value, according to Antonov.

This particular statement has made Hollywood producers a little jealous, since the manpower problem in U.S. studios is becoming more serious every day. Antonov also told of the tremendous difficulties encountered by the Russian motion picture industry. All the major studios had to be removed, lock, stock, and barrel, to central Asia. Two of the largest studios, Mosfilm and Lenfilm, formerly situated in Moscow and Leningrad, have been transferred to Alma-Ata, beyond the Urals. Newsreel and war front documentaries, however, are still being turned out in the Moscow and Leningrad plants, of the studios, who employ a staff of 160 cameramen in the front line.

Cameramen are being trained in Government schools to take the place of those who lose their lives in the line of duty.

Book Reviews

THE FILM SENSE, by S. M. Eisenstein. (Faber & Faber, 10s. 6d.)

Eisenstein is one of the six great living film makers (fill in the other five for yourself), and any books by him, let alone his first, which this is, must command (and be read with) attention.

The Film Sense is not, in any sense, a practical study. It is an attempt to erect a complete theory of film aesthetic from the original theory of montage (no—not you—Mr. Vorkapitch) which Eisenstein himself invented. To do this he indulges in elaborate *post facto* theorising on sequences in existing films (notably in an analysis of picture and sound from *Alexander Nevski*) and also studies montage (as it appears to him) in the works of various practitioners in other arts—including da Vinci, El Greco, Van Gogh, Bach, Verdi, Rimbaud, Whitman, Gogol and so on.

At this point your reviewer must confess that he finds himself, for the first time in his life, being a thorough low-brow, and would like to add that the thing he enjoyed most in the book occurs in Appendix 3—a record of the shot sequence of the finale of Eisenstein's *Strike*. It reads as follows:

10. The bull's head is fastened with a rope to a bench.

11. One thousand persons rush past the camera.

As an extremely esoteric study of the more curious aspects of film theory, *The Film Sense* is certainly interesting. It is full of exceedingly interesting quotations, and is illustrated by stills and diagrams, including one long one at the back which pulls out.

Photographic Optics by Arthur Cox. Published by The Focal Press. 15s.

This book sets out to explain, in language which can be understood by the layman, the highly technical business of the optics of photographic lenses; and it does that very successfully. Into a little over 300 pages the author has crammed an astonishing amount and variety of information. The man who uses a camera, whether he is a beginner, "advanced" amateur or professional, will find in these pages everything he wants to know about lenses, told in plain English and "without using the much dreaded mathematical arguments"—to quote the dust jacket.

Of course it is impossible to talk about optics and leave out formulae altogether, but these have been kept to a minimum and are of the kind that can be followed without a knowledge of higher mathematics. In addition, a great number of very good diagrams are used to clarify the explanations given in the text.

Starting with elementary definitions of light rays, focal length, depth of focus, focal numbers and so on, the reader is led almost painlessly to more advanced discussion of lens performance, the defects or aberrations found in lenses, and basic lens types. There is a chapter on how to test optical equipment; and a fair amount of space is devoted to infra-red, polarising filters, lens hoods, surface coating, view finders, range finders, lenses for enlarging and projection, film viewers, etc., etc. This very rough outline of the scope of the book is intended to show that compactness has not been achieved by sacrificing thoroughness. This is the ideal book on the subject for the practical worker in photography.

Some Opinions about

WORLD of PLENTY

CABLE FROM WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE, HOT SPRINGS, VIRGINIA, USA—WORLD OF PLENTY WAS SHOWN TO A FULL HOUSE OF THREE HUNDRED DELEGATES AND PRESSMEN. WAS RECEIVED WITH PROLONGED APPLAUSE AND EXCITED MUCH COMMENT AND ENTHUSIASM AT THE CONFERENCE. USA PRESS RELATIONS OFFICER SAW IT TWICE AND WAS PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED. WE HAVE REQUESTS FOR THE FILM FROM CHINESE, EGYPTIAN, INDIAN AND AMERICAN DELEGATES. THE FILM HAPPENS TO SUMMARISE AND SET FORTH PICTORIALLY SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCLUSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE.

Something of a model in this method of posing important problems for serious screen discussion is the study of international nutrition recently produced for the Ministry of Information. The audience are left with the impression that they have been treated to a frank, realistic, and pictorially lucid discussion of a complicated problem. It is important to note, however, that the film would not have served this or any other useful purpose if it had not contrived, while treating a serious subject seriously, to keep expectant and amused the spectator's pleasure-loving eye.—Leading article, *The Times*.

The whole art of advocacy is revealed in this film about food. The art, of course, is to state a short, simple thesis in many words, illustrating it over and over again, until the argument just cannot be missed or forgotten.—*Evening Standard*.

World of Plenty is much more than a first-class documentary. It is a political event. It is the first satisfactory use of modern technique to explain to the public one of the great world problems about which common people as well as statesmen and technicians must be compelled to think. *World of Plenty* is a front-page story and a leading article thrown at the heads of cinemagoers, and, whatever its success or failure as entertainment, it will implant a seed.—*New Statesman*.

There is an urgency and bitterness in this film, both in its simple statement of the nightmare contradiction of the pre-war world of starvation and glut and in the inevitable unanswerable conclusion—a world plan for food must be found. Regarded as entertainment, it is as dramatic as any thriller. The selection of material, the editing, the welding of it together by means of an under-running, vivid and pointed conversation between two men, show how completely the producer is the master of his medium.—*News Chronicle*.

It is the function of this film to inspire determination and it represents a major contribution to the United Nations' will to plan.—*The Spectator*. It has tense, dramatic dialogue. It has drama and beauty and ugliness as well as searing reality.—*Daily Mirror*.

A difficult subject has been handled in such a way as to give it excitement instead of the air of massive deliberation which sometimes broods over the film of fact. *World of Plenty* makes one think of new movements, new ideas, on the factual side.—*Sunday Times*.

PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

Script: Eric Knight and Paul Rotha. Associate Director: Yvonne Fletcher. Music: William Alwyn. Maps and Diagrams: The Isotype Institute. Additional Dialogue: Miles Malleston. Speakers: Eric Knight, E. V. H. Emmett, Robert St. John, Henry Hallatt, Thomas Chalmers. Length 48 minutes.

Distributed by Paramount

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FILM OF THE MONTH

The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp

The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp: Archers Production: Written, Produced and Directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger.

It is sometimes said that nowadays mere size, rather than symmetry or grace, is sufficient to impress the majority. On this thesis *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* is certainly a veritable Albert Hall of a film, and impressive in exactly the same terms. Its West End success is undoubted, and presumably its inordinate length has something to do with it; nevertheless, about 70 minutes could easily be removed and the film would be not a whit the worse and probably a good deal better.

But the interesting thing about *Blimp* is not so much the film as its philosophy of life, and the propagandist slant which it puts forward.

Having agreed therefore that it is too long, has the best acting and the worst colour seen for a very long time, and one sequence (the duel) which is real movie, let us pass to a consideration of what factors have contributed to the sublime un-Englishness of the whole affair.

There is no question at all of the sincerity of its makers, Powell and Pressburger. The film is a genuine and often striking attempt to pay tribute to the English.

But the difficulty is that the English people in the film represent what people from the European mainland think they would like them to be; and this is not the same thing as what they are. This is a fact which the Germans are constantly having to discover over again; which makes it all the more extraordinary that Blimp has to be taught to adapt himself to modern life (and death) by a Prussian.

However, it is worth examining in more detail the apparent thought processes which evolved the story.

They appear to be something as follows:

1. What about making a film about Low's Colonel Blimp?
2. Maybe Blimp isn't really a reactionary and dangerous old soldier. Maybe he has a heart of gold. Maybe there's a logical background which explains his attitude today.
3. All right, let's make a film about his life history and explain him to the ordinary people. Then they'll understand he doesn't mean any harm and will be quite all right after the war and prepared to see their point of view.
4. All right then. For simplicity's sake we'll confine the whole story to the wealthier upper middle class group and reflect the whole thing through the eyes of a German. Not a Nazi, mind you, but a converted Prussian officer.

5. And don't forget some scenes for Deborah Kerr.

6. And be lavish.

In all seriousness, however, there is something highly disturbing in the very sincerity with which our pseudo-British gent is presented. Not only is he not Low's Blimp; he is the very reverse—an apologia for the upper-class specialists who misguided this country into the mud of Munich and the disasters of 1939-40.

It is not without significance that the film contains no report of what Blimp was doing and thinking at the time of Manchukuo, Abyssinia, or the Spanish Civil War. (There is a hint that he was Governor of Jamaica—but only in terms of paying an oblique tribute to the Colonial Empire).

No, the real trouble is that the Blimp of this film is the Englishman that a certain type of emigré would like to think exists—stupid, brave, amiable, kind to animals and domestic, and, *au fond* eminently amenable to reason, particularly if put forward by someone of another nationality.

Unfortunately the type does not exist; the nearest approach being not the diehard, who sincerely and openly professes his intentions and doesn't try to be nice about it, but rather the quisling or Munichite who con-

ceals his venom under the facile charm of you-know-who.

The best thing *Blimp* can do is to reassure the reactionaries by making it clearer that they are, as they have themselves so often suspected, the salt of the earth. And it is remarkable, if you think back over the film, that not one single ordinary person, such as you may meet in the street or a bus in England, has anything more than a walking-on part in the entire film. But the people are perhaps not important in comparison with the huge collection of financiers, soldiers, diplomats, judges, etc., who pat our Prussian hero on the back in 1919 and promise to put Germany on her feet again. Note, too, that it is the Prussian who reneges on the Nazis, while the financiers, soldiers, diplomats, etc., as we well remember—carried on the good work of backing up Hitler.

As one sees Blimp reunited to his German friend, and being taught by him a few elementary facts about international affairs, one wonders who is the real hero of the film—the German who doesn't like Hitler or the Old Soldier who refuses to die?

And, as a final postscript, can anyone explain the scene in the last war where Blimp proudly announces that we are winning because we play fair, and then leaves a South African officer to torture some German prisoners? Was this put in to make a dramatic contrast with the Boer War opening scenes? Or do the Archers just dislike South Africa?

★ *For your information*

IN every progressive enterprise there must be leaders and those who follow behind. As artistic and technical progress in cinematography quickens to the tempo and stimulus of war, "KINEMATOGRAPH WEEKLY" is always to be found "up-with-the-leaders", its well-informed pages radiating perception and far-sighted thinking. Kinematography's leaders themselves know this for truth and turn to "K.W." week by week for information and enlightenment.

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they consult the experts, a British and American farmer, a housewife coping with rationing problems or one of the bevy of celebrities mentioned above. War brought tremendous problems on the food front but it also brought far reaching and revolutionary solutions to them. In Britain it happened swiftly, in America with her vast resources it is happening more slowly, but now every person gets a fair share in the country's food supply. If it can be done in war, it can be done in peace. This is one of the things the film says. To give this message the necessary trumpet blast, Henry Wallace is brought in to say his celebrated piece about the Common Man.* This provides an excellent finish to what is an important film. But many people will prefer Sir John Orr, who towers above his screen companions.† His words, we admit, have not got the right spellbinding quality for a peroration but, with the implicit suggestion of effort and toil, they suggest that there is work to be done before achievement and that no one enters upon the promised land without fighting.

The Common Man indeed. He who has ever looked in a mirror and said, "I am the Common Man" deserves no World of Plenty.

If there was ever a film of which it might be truly said that everyone should see it, this is the film. Alwyn has written music which matches the film in breadth of vision. We are glad to hear that after its initial successes with specialised audiences it is to be shown publicly.

* *I say that the century on which we are entering, the century which will come into being after this war, can be and must be the century of the Common Man.*

† *We cannot attain freedom from want until every man, woman and child shall have enough of the right kind of food to enable them to develop their full and inherited capacity for health and well-being.*

Scientific Films

The English Scientific Film Association was formed on Saturday, May 15th, 1943, at a meeting representative of science and films, convened by the Scientific Films Committee of the Association of Scientific Workers. Mr. Arthur Elton, who was in the chair, stated that the new association was to be independent and self-governing. An Interim Planning Committee was appointed to frame the constitution and to propose conditions of membership. Contact has already been made with the equivalent Scottish Association. Among the aims of the English Scientific Film Association are the following:

To promote the national and international use of the Scientific Film in order to achieve the widest possible understanding and appreciation of scientific methods and outlook, especially in relation to social progress;

to collect, collate and distribute information on the Scientific Film;

to publish comprehensive lists of Scientific Films graded according to scientific merit;

to establish relations with Government departments, public bodies and other organisations which are in a position to make, use or circulate scientific films;

to support and consult a representative panel of scientists to advise producers of films of all types in scientific matters, and to maintain close contact with the film industry;

The acting secretary is Mr. M. Michaelis, 51 Fitzjohn's Avenue, London, N.W.3.